
Blighted Property Review Committee
Thursday, September 15, 2011
Determination Hearing
Meeting Report

Mr. Luckey called the Determination Hearing to order at 6:10 pm.

Mr. Luckey announced that the purpose of the hearing was to consider if the conditions of the properties on the agenda met the conditions set by the Pennsylvania Urban Redevelopment Law of 1945, as amended and the City of Reading Blighted Property Review Committee Ordinance, and could be determined as blighted.

BPRC Attendance: D. Luckey, W. Bealer, H. Urena, M. Wolfe

Staff Attendance: L. Kelleher, T. Butler, S. Haver, M. Reinhart

Mr. Luckey asked Ms. Butler, attorney from the City's Law Department, to conduct the hearing. Ms. Butler explained the hearing procedures and summarized the blighted conditions as set forth in the City's Blighted Property Ordinance.

- **1217 Oley St, owned by Wells Fargo Wagon, 888 E Walnut St Pasadena CA 91101, Purchased April 2010.**

Ms. Butler asked the Committee to consider a motion to remove this property from the list, as it was recently purchased by a new owner who has resolved the blighted issues at the property.

Ms. Wolfe moved, seconded by Mr. Bealer, to remove 1217 Oley Street from the blighted list. The motion was approved unanimously.

Mr. Butler asked the Committee to consider tabling the following properties:

- **302 South 7th., owned by Edward Spencer, 551 R McKnight Street, No purchase date listed**

Ms. Butler stated that Mr. Spencer agreed to an inspection to evaluate the habitability of the property.

Mr. Bealer moved, seconded by Mr. Urena, to table 302 South 7th Street until the October hearing. The motion was approved unanimously.

- **829 N 11th St., owned by Xavier Mendoza, 1009 M 10th St, Reading PA 19604, Purchased April 2002 – Tabled at July Certification Hearing as affidavits were not issued.**

Ms. Butler reported that further research into the habitability of the property needs to occur.

Mr. Urena moved seconded by Ms. Wolfe, to table 829 North 11th Street. The motion was approved unanimously.

- **922 Penn St, owned by Amado Brito, 108 N Front Street, Reading PA, Purchased March 2001 – Tabled at July Certification Hearing**

Ms. Butler stated that affidavits were not issued for this property; therefore the property conditions are unknown.

Mr. Bealer moved, seconded by Mr. Urena, to table 922 Penn Street. The motion was approved unanimously.

- **229 N. 4th St., owned by Lobos Three LLC aka Ben Epstein, 1455 E 15th St., Brooklyn NY 11230, Purchased November 2005 – Tabled at June Certification Hearing**

Ms. Butler stated that there are issues to resolve with the legal descriptions vs. the numbering of the properties of this and the other Lobos properties located in this block.

Ms. Wolfe moved, seconded by Mr. Bealer, to table 229 N 4th Street. The motion was approved unanimously.

Determination Hearing

Ms. Butler stated that the properties will be taken out of agenda order. The properties with owners or others willing to testify will be taken before properties not having representatives present.

- **128 Elm Street, owned by Charles Lehman Sr., 1390 Summer Mountain Rd., Palmerton PA 18071, Purchased Sept 2010**

Ms. Butler asked the property owner or his representative to step forward. Charles Lehman stepped forward. Ms. Kelleher administered the oath to Mr. Lehman and provided him with a property packet.

Ms. Butler asked Ms. Kelleher if she received, reviewed and completed the Summary Sheet and if the Summary Sheet was an accurate representation of the supporting documentation. Ms. Kelleher replied affirmatively.

Ms. Butler entered the property packet for 128 Elm Street into the record and reviewed the

documents and affidavits submitted and attached as follows:

- Notice mailed to the property owner via first class and certified mail on August 14, 2011.
- Notice posted on the property on July 26, 2011
- Delinquent water charges totaling \$168
- No Delinquent Taxes
- No Water Service
- Gas Service Off – meter removed November 2010
- Trades reports that the building is vacant and in need of rehabilitation.
- Property Maintenance reports that there are citations for failure to remove trash and debris (interior and exterior) in 2006; Notice of condemnation unfit for human habitation in 2010.
- No Delinquent Trash and Recycling Charges
- No Liens

Ms. Butler stated that the property meets the blighted criteria. She also noted that the photograph shows two (2) properties numbered 128 and 130 Elm Street. She stated that 130 Elm Street no longer exists and that both properties were joined to form 128 Elm Street.

Mr. Lehman explained that he is arguing with his insurer regarding the cost to rehab the property which has caused a delay in the repair of the property. He stated that the damaging fire was caused by a tenant who placed a bed too close to the baseboard heater.

Ms. Kelleher inquired when the fire occurred. Mr. Lehman stated that the fire took place in December 2010. He stated that he has been working with his insurance company through Lawrence Myerhoffer, who is an adjuster, to rectify the issues with the insurance company. He provided a copy of the proposal to install front windows and replace the eaves and shingles, etc.

Mr. Lehman stated that he owns 36 rental units within Reading and they are well managed with no problems or issues.

Mr. Luckey described the blighted property process and suggested that Mr. Lehman continue working to rehabilitate the property.

Public Comment

Ms. Butler opened the floor for public comment. No one stepped forward.

BPRC Vote

Ms. Wolfe moved, seconded by Mr. Urena, to approve the determination of 128 Elm Street as a blighted property. The motion was approved unanimously.

- **364 North Front St., owned by Donna Smith & Steve Roberson, PO Box 1574 Allentown PA 18105, No purchase date listed**

Ms. Butler asked the property owner to step to the podium. No one stepped forward.

Ms. Butler asked Ms. Kelleher if she received, reviewed and completed the Summary Sheet and if the Summary Sheet was an accurate representation of the supporting documentation. Ms. Kelleher replied affirmatively.

Ms. Butler entered the property packet into the record and reviewed the documents and affidavits submitted and attached as follows:

- Notice mailed to the property owner via first class and certified mail on August 14, 2011.
- Notice posted on the property on July 26, 2011
- Delinquent water totaling \$4,263.08
- Water Service Off
- Gas Service Off, meter removed 1998
- Delinquent taxes for 2011 totaling \$390.71 and 2010 totaling \$263.10
- Trades reports that the building is vacant
- Property Maintenance reports that the property files indicate that the property records show trash and weeds citations were issued in 2005, 2008 and 2010
- Delinquent trash and recycling charges totaling \$1756.65
- Liens totaling \$3085.98 for unpaid taxes 2005 through 2009 and trash and recycling 2004 through 2009

Public Comment

Ms. Butler opened the floor for public comment. Ms. Gloria Hernandez stepped to the podium. Ms. Kelleher issued the oath to Ms. Hernandez.

Ms. Hernandez explained that she resides in this block with her children and that her mother resides at the property that adjoins 364 North Front Street. She stated that the deteriorated condition of this property has caused many expensive repairs to her mother's property. She stated that the balcony and roof (at the rear of the property) recently caved in. She stated that her family has been trying to purchase this property for some time. She stated that the property has been boarded up since 1996. She again stated that the family is interested in taking ownership of the property.

Mr. Bealer asked Mr. Haver to ask the Building Inspector to perform an emergency demolition of this property before it causes further damages to the adjoining properties. He noted the damages to the property that adjoins 334 Chestnut Street.

BPRC Vote

Ms. Wolfe moved, seconded by Mr. Urena, to approve the determination of 364 N Front Street as a blighted property. The motion was approved unanimously.

Ms. Butler inquired if any person representing the following properties were present and she entered the following property packets into the record:

- **542 Tulpehocken St, owned by Buy We Will LLC, 157 N. Front Street, Reading 19601, Purchased May 2005.** – No water service, delinquent water charges, no gas service, five (5) years of delinquent taxes, various codes violations for weeds and trash, delinquent trash and recycling charges, known to be vacant
- **417 Tulpehocken St, owned by Buy We Will LLC, 157 N. Front Street Reading 19601, Purchased May 2005** – No water service, delinquent water charges, four (4) years of delinquent taxes, known to be vacant, various codes violations, delinquent trash and recycling charges
- **1014 Windsor St, owned by Qing-Xue Zhang, 1018 Windsor Street 19604, Purchased September 2004** - No water service, delinquent water charges, no gas service, various codes violations
- **1121 Amity St, owned by Vendee Mtg Trust 2000-1 % Bankers Trust Co of CA NA, 1761 E Saint Andrew Pl Santa Ana CA 92705, Purchased June 2000** – No water service, delinquent water charges, no gas service, various codes violations, delinquent trash and recycling charges
- **645 Locust St, owned by Michael Gregory, 609 Madison Ave., Reading PA, Purchased July 2005** - No water service, two (2) years delinquent taxes, no gas service, various codes violations, unpaid 2010 school property taxes
- **647 Locust St, owned by Michael Gregory, 609 Madison Av., Reading PA, Purchased July 2005** – No water service, delinquent water charges, no gas service, various codes violations, delinquent trash charges, delinquent 2010 school property taxes
- **304 South 7th St., owned by Evelyn Villamar, 611 W 137th St Apt 56 New York NY 10031, Purchased December 2004** – No water service, delinquent water charges, delinquent property taxes for six (6) years, various codes violations and work orders, delinquent trash and recycling charges
- **544 Tulpehocken St., owned by Manuel Cardenas, 544 Tulpehocken Street, Purchased July 2006** – No water service, delinquent water charges, two (2) years delinquent taxes, no gas service, known to be vacant, delinquent trash and recycling charges

No one stepped forward.

Public Comment

Ms. Butler opened the floor for public comment. No one stepped forward.

Ms. Butler stated that each of these properties meets the blight criteria and asked the Committee to approve entering these property packets into the record.

Mr. Bealer moved, seconded by Mr. Urena, to enter the above property packets into the record. The motion was approved unanimously.

Ms. Wolfe moved, seconded by Mr. Urena, to approve the blighted determination of these properties. The motion was approved unanimously.

Mr. Urena moved, seconded by Mr. Bealer, to adjourn the determination hearing.

Respectfully submitted by Linda A. Kelleher, Secretary